# A MEMOIR OF RAO BAHADUR RANCHHODLAL CHHOTALAL, C.I.E.

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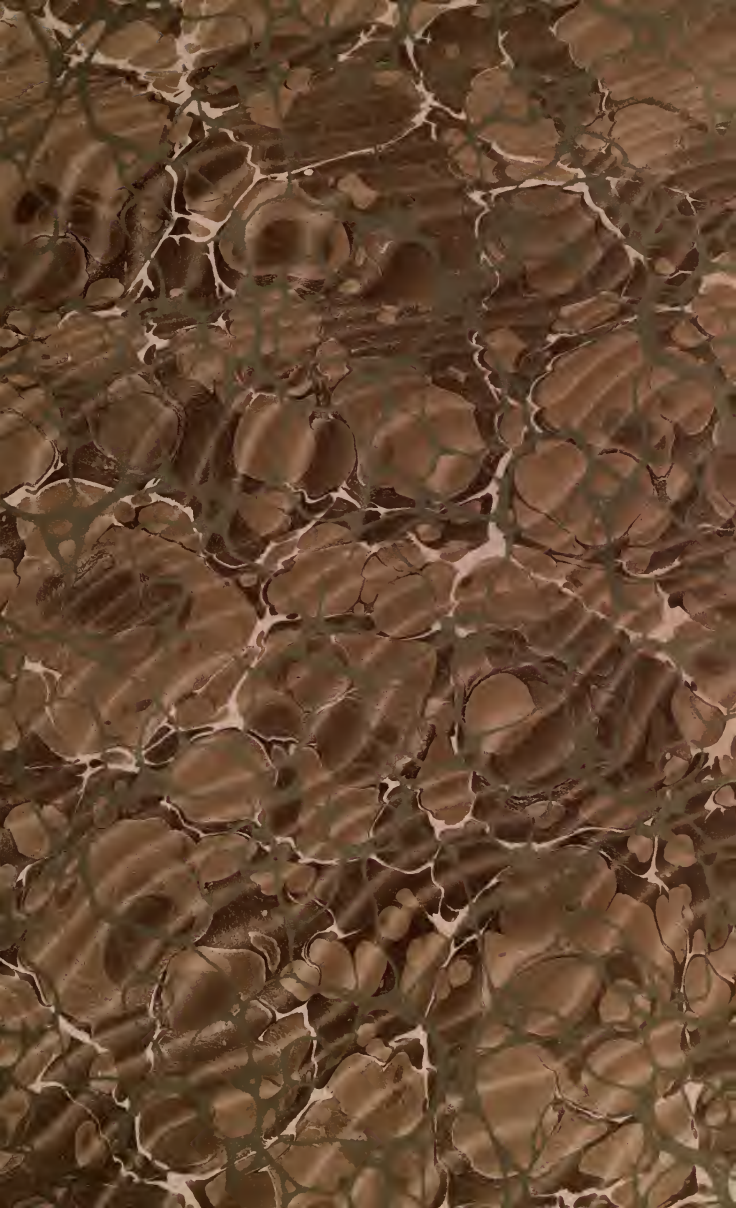

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Rao Bahadur Ranchhodlal Chhotalal, C.I.E.

# Memoir

OF

# Rao Bahadur Ranchhodlal Chhotalal, C.I.E.,

LATE MEMBER OF THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL, BOMBAY,
AND FOUNDER OF THE MILL INDUSTRY OF GUJARAT.


COMPILED BY

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FORMERLY COLLECTOR OF AHMADABAD AND COMMISSIONER, N.D.


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# INTRODUCTION.

It was for many years my ambition to write a memoir of Rao Bahadur Ranchhodlal Chhotalal, one of the ablest, most courteous and most progressive Hindu gentlemen with whom it was ever my lot to be associated during my thirty-five years' career in India. It was to assist in the fulfilment of this object that some years after I had left Ahmadabad, Mr. Ranchhodlal's grandson, the late Sir Chinubhai Madhavlal, Bart., C.I.E., kindly entrusted me with a long typewritten account of his grandfather's career, prepared by Mr. Trikamlal Damodhardas, a High Court pleader of Ahmadabad, which he was anxious that I should use in the preparation of the long contemplated biography. I also collected further information from other friends and acquaintances, among whom I must particularly mention Rao Bahadur Bulakhidas, late District Deputy Collector; Mr. Trikamlal Dinanath, who supplied me with certain information and statistics relating to the mill industry in Gujarat, and Mr. A. H. A. Simcox, I.C.S., who, in 1916, while he was serving as Collector of Ahmadabad, sent me a very useful note on the water-supply and drainage system of that city. The India Office records were also consulted, and Mr. L. Robertson, C.S.I., Secretary to the Bombay Government, helped me with some valuable details. A variety of circumstances prevented me from utilising the collected materials and commencing to write the memoir of my old friend until the close of 1919; and then, alas! I began to realise that the energy requisite for such a compilation was no longer vouchsafed to me. *L'homme propose, Dieu dispose.* Almost in despair, I appealed to another retired Indian Civilian, Mr. S. M. Edwardes, who served, like myself, in the Bombay Presidency, to write the memoir for me and so assist me in paying my last tribute to the

memory of my old friend, the founder of modern Ahmadabad, and he most kindly consented. The following pages, descriptive of the career and character of Rao Bahadur Ranchhodlal, are thus the work of Mr. Edwardes, who has freely utilised the typewritten memorandum of Mr. Trikamlal Damodhardas and the rest of the scattered materials above-mentioned. The author has enhanced the value of the publication by the inclusion of a combined index and glossary designed to assist English readers who may be unacquainted with Indian terms and nomenclature.

And now I am fain to add a brief word to the tale set forth in the succeeding pages. Between April, 1888, and November, 1891, I held the appointment of Collector and Magistrate of Ahmadabad and Commissioner of the Northern Division at the very time when Mr. Ranchhodlal Chhotalal was immersed in the heavy task of introducing an improved water-supply and a modern system of sanitation into the populous capital of Gujarat. Mr. Ranchhodlal was at that date President of the Ahmadabad Municipality, having been appointed a year or two before my arrival by Lord Reay's Government. He was the first Indian gentleman chosen for the post, in pursuance of the policy of Lord Ripon of associating Indians with the work of local self-government; and in his capacity as President he became responsible for all the executive work of the municipality. The appointment was no sinecure, as anyone with experience of urban administration in India will readily admit. Scarcely a day passed, while I was in Ahmadabad, that Mr. Ranchhodlal did not call upon me early in the morning to consult me about improvements and reforms or to report the progress of his schemes. Consequently, I soon became on terms of great intimacy with him and learned to appreciate his tact, ability and modesty. His actual achievements in municipal administration are described in a later page, as also his successful introduction into Gujarat of the cotton-spinning and weaving industry. The latter work formed the basis of the large fortune which he gradually accumu-

lated—a fortune which was subsequently developed by his son and grandson I have been told by leading men of business in Ahmadabad that Ranchhodlal could have accumulated much greater wealth, had he elected to devote his whole time to the textile industry instead of spending a large portion of the day on the problems of urban improvement. After I left Ahmadabad, Mr. Ranchhodlal became a member of the Legislative Council of the Governor of Bombay. His work on the Council was marked by the same sincerity and the same degree of personal application that had characterised his work in Ahmadabad.

Mr. Ranchhodlal was one of the few Hindu gentlemen I have known who maintained throughout life an unquestioning and unshaken attachment to the faith of their ancestors. This devotion was combined with a most progressive spirit in material and mundane affairs. I well remember how once, after his return from Bhimnath, a remote and very holy spot in the Himalayas, whither he had made a pilgrimage with some of his family, he sought my assistance in carrying out certain projects designed for the benefit of the pilgrims who annually visited the shrine. He was anxious that the flights of steps leading to the sacred waters should be repaired or rebuilt, and that certain sanitary works, the value of which he had learnt to appreciate in Ahmadabad, should be constructed. He believed that if I, as District Magistrate, appealed on his behalf to the Deputy Commissioner of the district, with whom he was personally unacquainted, and remitted the money required for these projects to him, there was greater possibility of the amount being advantageously expended. Gladly did I write to the officer, explaining the situation and Ranchhodlal's object, and in due course received a cordial reply, as a result of which Ranchhodlal forwarded through me a sum of two thousand rupees to meet the cost of the necessary works.

Reference is made in the pages of this memoir to Ranchhodlal's son, Madhavlal, with whom I was also